



Miss New India

Bharati Mukherjee

[Download now](#)

[Read Online ➔](#)

Miss New India

Bharati Mukherjee

Miss New India Bharati Mukherjee

Born into a traditional lower-middle-class family, Anjali sets off to Bangalore where she falls in with an audacious and ambitious crowd of young people. However, the seductive pull of modernity does not come without a dark side . . .

Anjali Bose is "Miss New India." Born into a traditional lower-middle-class family and living in a backwater town with an arranged marriage on the horizon, Anjali's prospects don't look great. But her ambition and fluency in language do not go unnoticed by her expat teacher, Peter Champion. And champion her he does, both to other powerful people who can help her along the way and to Anjali herself, stirring in her a desire to take charge of her own destiny.

So she sets off to Bangalore, India's fastest-growing major metropolis, and quickly falls in with an audacious and ambitious crowd of young people, who have learned how to sound American by watching shows like *Seinfeld* in order to get jobs as call-center service agents, where they are quickly able to out-earn their parents. And it is in this high-tech city where Anjali - suddenly free from the traditional confines of class, caste, gender, and more - is able to confront her past and reinvent herself. Of course, the seductive pull of modernity does not come without a dark side...

Miss New India Details

Date : Published May 17th 2011 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (first published January 1st 2011)

ISBN : 9780618646531

Author : Bharati Mukherjee

Format : Hardcover 328 pages

Genre : Fiction, Cultural, India, Asia, Asian Literature, Indian Literature, Adult



[Download Miss New India ...pdf](#)



[Read Online Miss New India ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Miss New India Bharati Mukherjee

From Reader Review Miss New India for online ebook

Mathis Bailey says

I rate this a 2.5.

I was in the mood for something whimsical and fun so I chose this book knowing little going into it. However it quite didn't meet my expectations.

The story started off enchantingly good with the prospects of suitors for Anjali, then it lost its luster half way through. It went from a romantic tale to a murder mystery real quick. Once Anjali moves to Bangalore all hell breaks lose and the story seems to fall apart somewhere in the middle. There was just way too much melodramatics and bantering going on in this 300 page novel. The political conversations comes off contrived and forced, which drags the story. But Anjali's ditzy personality keeps the story afloat with its light heartedness. The author's writing style is charmingly smooth, however the subplots suffers a lot. It felt like the deaths and misfortunes happens suddenly with little resolution.

And what was up with Anjali having the hots for every guy that she encountered? There was the photographer, the professor, the columnist, the magazine photographer, and the sexual assaulter.. all of whom didn't seem romantically interested in her, but in her deluded mind she felt different.

Synopsis: The Story is about a nineteen year old girl named Anjali Bose, who runs away from home due to an impending arranged marriage and sets out for the big city life of Bangalore. Once there, she has aspirations to become a call agent to put her impeccable English to use. However, things quickly go south when she meets some city slickers who takes advantage of her countryside naïve ways.

Overall, it's an easy, fun read with a light Bollywood romance flare. However I wouldn't say its a beach read...more like a lazy Sunday afternoon read. It took me a couple of days to finish it. I don't regret reading it, but I was glad once it was over. The ending was meh. The author tries to get deep and profound on the last couple of pages. Throughout the story we don't see Anjali grow much mentally and come into her own, which was a bit of let a down. However I liked the traditional vs modern India aspects and the LGBT themes.

I recommend this book if you liked The Sleeping Dictionary, Mansfield Park and The white Tiger.

Lesley says

This book went a lot of places. None of them were particularly compelling, at least as they were told. I didn't see any evidence of it being translated from another language but some of the turns of phrase were awkward in a way that often indicates that - and there were whole sections featuring incredibly dense, antiquated language that didn't fit the setting or voice of the main character - would a 19 year old girl ever use the word "propinquity"?? She acknowledged whole sentences not making any sense to her but that one seemed to slip by. I get that this is set in India so maybe it's just a cultural divide (or just indicative of the differences in English dialects) but it made the whole book a bit of a chore.

Lisa Sansone says

Random thoughts:

- It was kind of light, and easy to read, which I appreciated. The writer writes, for the most part, with an engaging touch. In a way, it's kind of a "pop" novel that deals with real, interesting themes.
- Conversely, though it deals with fairly serious, "large" themes (especially the tensions between old and new in a rapidly changing India), I'm not sure it qualifies as "great literature". In fact, it was the author's attempts at "great literature" that made it ultimately fall a bit flat for me. I thought the book was at its best when it was just kind of a fairly light-hearted take on a young girl's transition from small town to big city life in modern India. I felt like I got a good sense of the issues at hand. But mid-way through, I began to realize that the author had slightly "greater" ambitions. Basically, every character in the book, as well as every location, every scene, even every casual detail, "represents" something, or serves a largely symbolic/theoretical/one-dimensional role: there is a gay friend, an ex-patriot, an old colonialist lady, an entrepreneur, a traditional father, a colonial mansion, a call center, a terrorist, a nouveau riche benefactress, a free-thinking young man. Even the casual details (a look-alike roommate, a t-shirt, etc) come to serve a purpose. For me, it ended up reading like a "teen lit" book you might read in high school, where everything serves a purpose, and has an obvious meaning (or lesson) -- but nothing really is fleshed out or feels "real". I don't necessarily mean this as a criticism (I, for one, like teen lit, and think it serves a valid purpose). It's just that the book kind of bogs down, and rings a bit false, when the author tries to force her story (or story-telling) to be "great" and "profound". I feel like she was trying too hard (swinging for the fences), and that she didn't really succeed.
- Additionally (and related to the above), I never felt that I got a real handle on the main character. A small-town girl, she is supposed to have some obvious quality that endears her to an almost never-ending parade of super-interesting and influential people -- but it was never clear to me just what exactly was so special or endearing about her. Early on, we are told that she is not particularly attractive (except for her smile), but she somehow winds up as a cover girl, a style icon and artistic muse. We are also "told" that her high school teacher thinks she is unusually smart, but there was little in the actual description that made me feel she was all that smart (indeed, during a lot of the narrative she comes off as rather stupid, shallow and unlikable). I kept feeling that I was being "told" she was intelligent, sassy, and interesting, instead of actually experiencing it for myself. She was simultaneously supposed to represent a kind of universal "every girl", while being endlessly fascinating to everyone. Like the plot, I'm not sure that she successfully resolved herself between being a metaphor and a real character. The author just tried too hard to force the metaphors, force the symbolism, even force the plot, instead of letting the meanings (and story) just arise more naturally and lightly.
- Again, I'm not trying to bash the book. It's not "great", but there were things about it that I really liked, and I *really* appreciated the author taking on an interesting topic in a very, very easy-to-read and simple way. You could do a lot worse if you are looking for an easy way to get to know modern India.

(One last comment. In a way, the style of this book reminded me of Indian cooking. There is a touch of a lot of different flavors: melodrama, comedy, social commentary, farce, extreme seriousness, light-heartedness, mystery, etc.)

Cleokatra says

I'm not sure what to say about this book. I really enjoyed the social commentary and learning about Indian culture. However, the overall storyline was a little weird. It kind of reminded me of Bridget Jones and I do *not* mean that in a good way. The main character gets herself into various predicaments and then some man comes riding to the rescue. It just seemed a little facile. Rather than dealing with a difficult narrative, just invoke Prince Charming.

However, it was an easy read, it was a fast read, and I do feel like I learned something from it. I'm glad I read the book and I would read other works by this author in the future.

Hadi says

I went to a reading by Bharati Mukherjee at which she ready the opening chapter of this and liked it enough to try the book. It didn't live up to the promise.

Part One (which ends with Anjali leaving Gauripur) was good but then things go a bit awry. Mukherjee crams as much as such can into the story - arranged marriages, rape, transvestites, gays, ex-pats, meditations on light and photography, call centres, terrorism and more - but the overall impact is that it all runs together and nothing much is said about any of it.

Part of the problem was Anjali/Angie herself, everyone's constantly telling that she's special and they expect great things of her but we never get a hint of what the specialness or spark is: except that she pretty and day dreams about a bigger life.

There's also patronizing tone to the descriptions of small town India and the small town people (Anjali's parents and community) which grated on me.

Genevieve says

2.5 stars if Goodreads allowed halves. I was really intrigued to learn about a young Indian woman's journey from bucking the chauvinist old school society where her father was to choose her husband from newspaper ads to a new independent life in Bangalore where the "new India" is emerging and giving women a chance to choose their own destiny. But ultimately I really struggled to identify with Anjali. I think she was supposed to come across as a Bridget Jones type character, someone a bit silly but endearing. Instead she comes off as dim and worthless when it comes to actually pursuing a career. I guess I wanted a narrative involving a story of a woman with newfound freedoms realizing her potential, but that's just not this novel. I will say it was interesting, and sobering, to learn about the American imitation classes the call center agents take, and I liked that the book raised questions about the cost of the New India - i.e. being always beholden to the US. But overall, the book just didn't enchant me.

Lisa says

I don't quite get this book. It is oddly written, with lots of disconnect in both style and plot details. The prose jumps from narration to internal dialogue with nary a by your leave. In the story, I would think I understood a situation, then a throwaway comment 1 or 100 pages later would make me question what actually happened. One spot near the end implies that many years must have passed, since radical city-wide changes seem to have taken place, then the next section reveals it has only been 8 months.

The jumps from narration to internal dialogue point up the cluelessness, self-absorption and banality of the main character, who is supposed to be something special, but my main takeaway in regard to her specialness is that umpteen-watt smile that she throws around whenever she doesn't know what else to do. I think the author might have been aiming for wry humor in many cases, but the effect was more odd than funny.

Anyway, in practice, Anjali's supposed specialness revolves around her willingness to rebel against a traditional small-town life trajectory, part of a wave of change spreading through the young women of India at the time the book was set (early 2000's, it seems). Presenting a portrait of "Anjali-as-representative-of-culture-change" is the book's focus rather than any kind of realistic character study. For instance, what seems like a pretty devastating incident happens to her early on, but she doesn't react with the emotional force you might expect. The event catalyzes the plot, but that's close to the end of it, as far as any violent reaction is concerned. There is a subsequent series of pretty-darn-horrible events related to her family, and though lip-service is paid to her feeling bad, trauma is dealt with in a shallow way overall.

This novel still gets 3.5 stars from me, though, because I liked reading it. I was confused sometimes, and Anjali was an immature ninny, but the Bangalore setting was pretty fascinating. Ancient mansions and high-end real estate, auto-rickshaws and fancy cars, etc. etc. I wish more of the story had taken place in an actual call center—what the heck is it like to work in one of those places anyway?—but since this is the first time I've ever seen the topic come up in a novel at all, I can't complain too much about that. It is interesting how many languages are spoken, and how meaning is attached to which languages people speak. Everyone instantly knows everyone else's religion and background (and makes assumptions about their abilities and character) simply by virtue of their last names. The book presents a picture of India in the midst of radical cultural evolution, in a time period I hadn't read about before in fiction, so worthwhile for that aspect alone.

Marie says

<http://mariesbookgarden.blogspot.com/...>

I picked this up at the library, intrigued by the premise and undeterred by the lukewarm (and sometimes outright negative) reviews on Goodreads. A novel about Bangalore, call centers, and the new Indian woman? Sure--sounds promising. I've read other Mukherjee novels and liked them, so I thought this was worth a try.

Sadly, this was not a winner. The main character, Anjali, is not likable and she's completely shallow...which I could live with, perhaps, if I cared anything about what happened to these characters. Once she made it to Bangalore, I lost track of some of the characters--they just were not drawn vividly enough--and then when the Bagehot House fell, I began skimming.

Why were all these people helping her? Anjali was ungrateful, not particularly talented, and lackadaisical, but everything seemed to go her way in the end, which seemed too good to be true.

Minnie, Anjali's obnoxiously snobby landlady, reminded me of a woman who ran a hostel in Jaipur, India. I believe she was Anglo-Indian as well. I remember that she "kindly" invited us to stay to dinner. The next morning when we were ready to leave, she presented us with an exorbitant bill for that dinner!

This book could have been so much better. I'm fascinated with the idea of the new India, but this was an uneven, shoddy attempt for a well-known and accomplished author. Disappointing...and glad to be done with it.

Rachel says

Nineteen year old Anjali Bose lives with her lower middle class family in a small village in India. Her father's dream is to arrange a marriage for her with a suitable boy but Anjali has bigger dreams than that. With the help of her English teacher, Anjali moves to Bangalore with the hopes of becoming a customer support specialist at a call center. She quickly learns that big-city life is not as easy and carefree as she thought it would be.

Anjali was a hard character to like. She floats through her life depending on her "award winning smile" to get her though tough situations. For some reason, the other characters are captivated by her and misread her vapidness as depth. I never quite understood why. Some of Anjali's decisions were just downright stupid and instead of sympathizing with her, I wanted to shake her.

I enjoyed reading about how India today is quite modern in some ways, yet still very traditional in others. I wish this book would have a had a glossary because the author uses quite a few words from different languages that I didn't know.

From what I understand, the author's previous books have gotten very good reviews. I look forward to reading one of her older books. This particular book was just okay.

Robyn says

Some things work really well in this novel; for instance, the author does a great job of depicting the internal conflict of modern-day India, with revered rituals and traditions on the one hand, and technology/modernity on the other. Anjali, the main character, represents the generation caught in between these two poles of identity--modern vs. traditional.

Unfortunately, the character of Anjali is also where the novel breaks down. She is continually influenced by other people. She thinks she knows what she wants but can never bring herself to totally go for it. Other people tell her who she is/should be, but she never becomes that person. Instead, Anjali falls back into old patterns of wanting to find a suitable husband. Her character, despite some big changes, does not seem to grow or evolve.

Then, suddenly, in the last chapter, she is enlightened?!? There is not a true sense of how she got there

mentally or emotionally on her own. Overall, just a bit disappointed.

Christina McLain says

I quite liked this book which was generally light in tone and easy to read. This is the story of Anjani, a young woman who lives her unprepossessing home town and her conventional life to seek fame and fortune in the IT driven new India. Driven by the ambitions of her former teacher, an American who came to India in the sixties and stayed on, and by a stunning act of violence perpetrated by a would-be suitor, Anjali goes to Bangalore to seek fame and fortune and succeeds despite many setbacks, including her own passivity. The only problem with this tale, as many reviewers have mentioned is that by herself, Anjali is not a very interesting character. Indeed it is difficult to imagine why so many people become so invested in her including her American mentor, a rich and interesting Prince charming of a guy who falls for her, and a pair of highflying Indian women who help propel her career. In fact Anjali seems little more than a tabula rasa on which other project their dreams. Except for her flight from home and harrowing journey across country, she shows little courage and initiative once in her new home. However the contrast between the teeming masses of the traditional India and the new consumerist nation propelled by IT and call-centres is well drawn.

Patty says

Anjali Bose is a small town girl in rural India who has big dreams. Her teacher, an ex-pat American, encourages her to make something of herself by heading to Bangalore, which they both see as the best new city in India. Anjali eventually heads there, and ends up in more trouble than she anticipated.

The writing in this novel is quite good, very poetic, in the first few chapters, but gradually heads downhill and becomes very pedestrian by the end. The problem, I think, is that there is just way too much plot in this book. The main characters deal with rape, international terrorism, false charges of murder, police brutality, arranged marriage, teenage runaways, divorce, gay men in India, botched back-alley sex change operations, prostitution, art theft, suicide, the role of outsourcing in the Indian economy, riots, the art of photography, homelessness, telecommunication centers, and more. By about the fourth major plot twist, there's no time for poetry anymore, and even for much of a reaction from the characters, because there's just too much happening. I think it could have been a much better book if it had just focused on a few of these issues instead of all of them.

That said, many of the characters here are quite appealing, particularly Anjali. And it certainly seems to be a very current look at Indian society (I learned, for instance, that the cool new dessert is cold coffee with ice cream, which I promptly went out to try, and I can inform you that it is *delicious*). Overall a fun read, but not a particularly deep one.

Amelia says

I loathed this book. It's going to be impossible for me to list all of the things I hated about this book. Also there are SPOILERS. And trigger warning for some upsetting things.

But let's start with the character. Anjali? I completely admit to having a total lack of empathy, because I

spent most of the book wanting to hit her. I think maybe this was down to bad writing/characterization- I *hope* this was bad writing, because Anjali had little to no personality. She spent the book: hoping someone would give her a sense of identity (literally, in thought italics "tell me who I am"); hoping that a man would find her suitable, marry her, and solve her problems so she wouldn't have to (despite the book supposedly resting on the premise that she wanted to try for a more independent life- a different life even from her parents, her small town, etc,- I'm not saying independence means a life without marriage, etc., but it does involve some f*cking personal responsibility, not procrastinating *getting a job in the hopes the guy you met for five bloody minutes will fall in love with you and marry you and he's rich so everything will be fine and the big scary world will make everything dandy and you totes don't have to worry anymore*); being stupid and ignorant and not ever trying to fix that (which if this book had had any sense of reality, Anjali may or may not have ended up in Bangalore, and given her shocking and crippling ridiculous levels of self-indulged, purposeful ignorance and frankly ridiculous stupidity, would have left her an unidentified corpse in a back alley somewhere in, on a generous estimate, about 5 days flat- in any city, anywhere), and getting into messes which she always, miraculously got saved from because hell if anyone knows why, she was lucky enough to have *lots* of wealthy, well-connected friends who for some reason thought she was special and were willing to go out on a limb for her. So she was perpetually saved, and everything was dandy. Guardian f*cking angels. Everyone else can work hard and have no one help them ever, but this ridiculous twit, who hears "deep" things, doesn't understand them, the reader hears in her voice as she tells us that she doesn't understand them, then *parrots said "deep" things back at other people*, and has them tell her how incredibly deep she is! How they've underestimated her! And she goes back to Gairipur, her hometown, only 8 months after having left it, and is apparently, somehow, successful. Even though in the first 3 or 4 months the book takes us through, this girl does nothing. Nothing. Jobless. Nothing impressive. But apparently she's a gorram unicorn made of glitter and rainbows because while she keeps walking herself right into crap situations, she continuously gets saved and handed things *that she doesn't have to work for and frankly doesn't deserve*. How is this supposed to make me sympathetic to her? Oh! (and yes, some lack of coherency here, because, *this book*).

May we speak for a moment about the trope, oh that lovely trope; actually, there may be more than one damaging trope. But here, the first one. One of her roommates at Bagehot house is Muslim. It's the only extended picture/time you get in this book with a Muslim character. There are a couple of more subtle issues I could maybe go into with how she's depicted, but let's go with the big one: it turns out, Husseina is a terrorist. Yep. Her husband off in London that she was married to at age 13 by her wealthy father and taken out of her boarding school in Dubai for (just for a few days- married, then returned to school) and her are part of a plot to bomb Heathrow. The Muslim... is a terrorist. This book was published in 2011. Seriously? Not ok.

Also, and I've been thinking this over carefully: there was a rape fairly early in the book. Anjali is raped by her would-be suitor, and it is this event which causes her to run away to Bangalore. Only 50 pages into the book (something like that) the reader has expectations for how this is going to be explored. Rape and violence against women=serious problem most everywhere; this is an incredibly nuanced sector to navigate, and as with anything, made additionally complicated by the culture it's within, so it should attend to those idiosyncrasies as well. Yet... rape/trauma occurs, our character runs away to Bangalore. And that's it. There is no post-trauma growth. There is... I mean, to an extent, everything is a plot device in a book, right? So I suppose even if there was post-trauma growth and Anjali developed as a character from it that could be seen as using the rape as a plot device, and then, ugh, what the hell. And instead what we get is a rape that after it happens is just left there. Oh hey, I need something to get me to go off somewhere? Ok, rape, got it. Boom. Still plot device. So then maybe it's senseless, and maybe that was the point, except... that didn't seem the point. It seemed like it was useful. And it's not like Anjali remained silent about the whole matter; she told people; this wasn't some statement on long denial and societal silences due to shaming. Nope. Instead, not

two days later, she's jumping in a car with a guy she just met who offered her a ride, and hoping since he's rich, maybe he'll like her and marry her and everything will be great. I mean, what? And while I totally don't want to dictate how someone should/could get over such a thing- we're exposed to a character, something traumatic happens (and yeah, you don't get to just throw rape around) and *nothing is addressed about it*. It's not dealt with, it's not *not* dealt with in a way that is just as telling; the character never seems to internally work through it; she doesn't... just nothing. Soooo, going off of that? Pretty sure rape was used as a handy plot device. And that? Not ok.

And for a moment... let's talk about Ali, and what happened to them. Because in a book where Muslim=terrorist, rape=plot device, and character=MarySue, let's talk about what fate befell the young Ali. So, first. Peter Champion is American, and he is Anjali's teacher. And she finds out (after he has to be *really, really obvious about it*) that he is stunningly happy because he has taken a lover- Ali- and Anjali is subsequently devastated. Also, it takes her *forever* to realize that this is a relationship. Now, the book had previously had hijra's in the village (transgender women)- and albeit Anjali was repulsed by them- but there I was, thinking that might be promising. Anyway. Peter and Ali are happy together. Later, we find out that Ali has run off for "back alley surgery", and Peter thinks Ali might be dead. Ali was never named hijra, but the implication (and there is only ever implication) is that Ali is transgender, and was seeking reassignment surgery. In the end of the book, we find that Ali is alive; but crippled, in a wheelchair, almost unrecognizably aged. Now, the Americans who were queer, they were fine- Peter and Rabi are left alone. But hold a minute. LGBT issues, especially if you want to examine transgender matters, are also nuanced, and that's true just about everywhere- and again, each culture/place is going to have its own idiosyncrasies. And instead, this book just throws this character in there *doesn't give them a voice* (because of language, mostly- I think Ali had maybe 4 lines of dialogue? but I'm taking that as subliminal, because have you noticed I've gotten on a pulpit and decided to be mad about everything?), makes anything that happens to them happen offscreen and vaguely, and then leaves them crippled which can be read or implied *as a direct result of their actions for attempting to embody their identity? dare I say... by very nature of their queerness?* Um. Nope. Not ok.

And while I'm thinking of things on the "way to go for total detachment and lack of characterization" list, I mean, this is vaguely funny, but Anjali may or may not have killed someone towards the end of the book. They were robbing the house, she knocked them both out, and one of them was in a coma and may-or-may-not-make-it. Someone she knew, as a matter of fact. Did Anjali feel or think anything about this? Was there any movement about this anywhere? Nope. Because Anjali is apparently soulless and is super empty headed. But oh so very special, don't forget that, everyone loves her.

The only thing that was maybe given some space was her father's suicide, and even then- yeah, not really. I mean, she did have like 4 total thoughts about it in the book, so for this story, that's huge! But if two of those thoughts are while you're on the floor in a shitty situation doing the equivalent of "life is wretched, I'm miserable, I just shouldn't bother anymore. Just let me die! I don't want to move" in the most melodramatic (and no, not an appeal for suicide) way possible, now using her father's suicide as a reason to pile more reasons for why she's wretched and shouldn't have to deal anymore instead of growing a f*cking backbone... that's not dealing with it. She finds out she was disowned to at the same time she was told of her father's suicide (not the same time as the floor melodrama) and there was no genuine work through of that. She felt vaguely guilty. Ok, there was that. Um. That's it? Seriously? Suicide. Suicide. We get nothing on the aftereffects of suicide? It didn't seem to be as much a mental health matter as a matter of honor, but nope nothing on that. Ok. Nothing on grief? Ok. Nothing on sudden loss? Ok. No real genuine emotion whatsoever except your own self-indulgent self-pity sometimes? Oh you like feeling pretty. Mmm. Ok. Nope. Sorry. Suicide as a convenient plot device? Not ok.

There are other things. The book was only 336 pages long; you may ask, how can there be other things? Oh,

but there are. But do I even want to devote *more* of my time to this than I already have? This was supposed to show global v traditional values. Um, Bangalore as a virtual city. Modernity? I've been pondering this question; why was this book assigned? Sure, there are some things you can pick out of the book about modernity, about the post-colonial world, about the pull of the traditional versus the pull of the modern; the rift between local and global; the role of technology. But it's also 2016; there are a lot of books that deal with these themes, I think. We've been asking ourselves these questions, and how to reconcile them for a while now. Yet this book is apparently popular as a choice. Why?

Ok. I think that ends my rant about *Miss New India*. I honestly think I could have more things to say about it, but really, this has to stop.

Frances Greenslade says

I loved this book. I may have been influenced by the fact that I was in Bangalore when I read it. For me, it captured the paradox of that city and of India in general: cows grazing on garbage beneath billboards advertising Tag Heuer Swiss watches; women in saris riding sidesaddle on the back of husbands' and sons' motorcycles, and women in jeans and helmets riding their own; chai wallahs and Barista cafes. Anjali, the protagonist, is convincing as a young woman who has escaped the traditional expectations of her family's marriage plans for her. She aspires to work in a call centre in Bangalore, but once in the city, she begins to see the hollowness of that dream and she begins to understand just how much is really possible. The novel has a strong narrative and, to me, avoids over-simplifying the desires of this young woman.

Robert E. Kennedy Library says

I wanted to like this book better than I did: it started out strong, with a young Indian woman from a mofussil (provincial) town on the brink of deciding to flee an impending marriage arranged by her family. An American teacher takes an interest and offers to help her go to Bangalore instead and make her own way in the world.

Once Anjali arrives in Bangalore, though, the story fell apart for me. While it dealt with interesting topics -- Indians immersing themselves in American culture in training for call centers, Anglo-Indians trying vainly to preserve some of the formality from the days of the Raj -- Anjali's character descended into a vain, shallow, boy-crazy ninny. The supporting characters (her teacher, Peter, and his lover Ali, Anjali's parents and sister, and even the crazy Anglo-Indian landlady Minnie) were well-drawn, but having Anjali at the center fatally weakened the book for me.

I did learn a little about modern India, and I liked it for that. For a wonderfully written book with a young Indian woman on the brink of marriage in a very different era, I'd recommend Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*.

Reviewed by Jan, Kennedy Library staff

Maybe you will like this book more. Find it at Kennedy Library
